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Historical mythtakers die hard

The disposition to traffic in disinformation is alarming in any society that sort of mashes along on the proposition that ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.

It is recorded, for instance, that two-thirds of the American people are now convinced that Lee Harvey Oswald was not the sole assassin in Dallas, and conceivably he was not. What he was, though, is the man who fired the fatal bullet. The fundamental work of the Warren Commission has not been discredited.

And yet we gentlemen of the press have lately received a video tape of the next version of "who really killed John F. Kennedy?" Since I need to look at something to relieve my distress when in the morning I walk on my treadmill, I looked at this creation, which begins by telling us that official America conspired to frame Oswald in order to rein in the big secret (we are not told what the big secret was).

Just for instance, the Zapruder shot is shown yet again that registers JFK's neck jolting aft when a shot was fired. And the solemn narrator tells you that this phe-

nomenon alone absolutely establishes that there had to be a gunman at the grassy knoll ahead of him.

Not three seconds are given to reporting the pathologists' commentary that a bullet entering the back of the neck can cause a rearward contraction, which would absolutely account for the movements photographed by Zapruder.

What dismays is the relative docility of the engines of public opinion. In recent years an effort has been made to sort of detach JFK from the Vietnam War. We have all heard the general theme, and after a bar or two ("Jackie-boy/And Vietnam/Weren't made for each other..."), any solemn Camelot historian can go with the whole oratorio. To wit, that if Kennedy had lived, we'd have pulled away from Vietnam as he was, "I'm going to do the whole time, but the plot was ruined by the arrival of Lyndon Johnson in office."

John P. Roche, who was on the scene at the White House during the critical years, surveys a book by John M. Newman plying that line ("JFK and Vietnam") and pronounces it a "triumph of stupefying imbecility."

It is possible that a generation from now the Camelot crowd will gradually change its mind about Vietnam. The perspectives may shift, permitting us to view it as one of the great heroic ventures in history, in



JFK: The myths persist

which the leader of the free world sought to sustain its commitment to the doctrine of containment intending no imperialist opportunism. We failed, but we cannot blame that on Jack Kennedy.

Perhaps the historical speculators will change their line, and in place of saying that JFK would have got us out of Vietnam will be saying that JFK would have consummated the liberation of Indochina.

Roche makes a critical point. "As I have suggested... Bobby Kennedy was his brother's alter ego, and if Newman's mind-reading is accurate, a presidential willingness to escape from Vietnam would surely have been reflected in his brother's statements then, and certainly later when Bobby was out of office. What did Bobby say? In Saigon, February 1962, he announced that 'we will remain here until we do win.' In a retrospective taped by John B. Martin in the spring of 1964, he was asked directly: 'There was never any consideration given to pulling out?' Bobby: 'No.'"

One report making the rounds is that more than one-third of the black American population has been convinced by the anti-white professionals that AIDS is a disease developed by white "ice men" for the purpose of inflicting genocide on blacks. Such statements are to smile at, or to cry over if one prefers. But what pains is that there is nothing approaching the corporate national anxiety to dispose of such rubbish.

Not long ago a society was founded whose kernel belief was that Dwight Eisenhower was a member of the Communist Party. Conservative sage Russell Kirk greeted that one by remarking dryly, "Eisenhower isn't a Communist. He is a golfer."

That ended that nonsense, but left-minded nonsense has nine lives.

* Which pathologists? & He's decoupling the "Thomson" reaction which results from injuries to the brain not the neck.

This is what I call a vigorously scientific analysis. Buckley is so smart, he doesn't need to read Newman's book - Roche's assessment is good enough for him.

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